

Rat Bite Fever

Occupational Bacterial Infection from Handling Rodents

What is Rat Bite Fever?

Rat Bite Fever is a bacterial infection caused by *Streptobacillus moniliformis* and in Asia the bacteria *Spirillum minus* is the main cause of infection. Rats carry this disease with no symptoms.

How does infection occur?

Infection can occur if someone is bitten or scratched by a rat. Consuming food contaminated by an infected rat's feces can also cause infection, as well as coming into contact with urine.

What are the symptoms?

Depending on the specific bacteria causing infection, symptoms may take up to 2 to 10 days or 1 to 6 weeks to develop. Symptoms include fever, headache, chills, rashes, nausea, vomiting, muscle and joint pain.

How do I prevent it?

Avoid any contact with wild rats and store food safely to avoid any contamination from rats. If handling rats, wear PPE such as gloves and wash hands after handling. If bitten or scratched by a rat, you wash the wound thoroughly, report to your supervisor and seek medical treatment.

How is it treated?

Rat Bite Fever is treated with antibiotics.

Resources used:

- The Center for Food Security and Public Health Zoonotic Disease Factsheets: Rat Bite Fever
- The Center for Food Security and Public Health Zoonotic Transmission Routes: Rat Bite Fever
- Chapter 28, Selected Zoonoses, (2015) *Lab Animal Medicine*, 3rd ed.